

Manti-La Sal National Forest Potential Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) Review Procedural Report

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POTENTIAL SCC REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Potential SCC Review Process

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.7(c)(3)) states that, “*The Regional Forester shall identify the species of conservation concern for the plan area*” (DOA 2012). The FSM 1921.01(2015) states that the Regional Forester will, “*Identify, in coordination with Responsible Official, the species of conservation concern....*” In keeping with these directives, resource specialists on the Manti-La Sal National Forest (MLNF) have been working closely with resource specialists from the Intermountain Regional Office (RO) to develop a potential list of SCC for the MLNF. Once the Regional Forester makes a final determination for this list of potential SCC species, it will be sent out for public review and comment. Once public comments are reviewed, the Regional Forester, in coordination with MLNF will develop the MLNF’s SCC List for the Forest’s current Forest Plan Revision effort.

This coordinated evaluation effort resulted in a two-phase filter process for all species known to occur on the MLNF. Phase-1 of the filter process was a coarse-filter that was implemented by the RO resource specialists in early 2016. Criteria outlined in the FSH 1909.12 (10)(12.52d) was used to evaluate each species to determine if they qualified as either “*must*” or “*should*” be considered as a potential SCC (RO 2016). Species were broken into two preliminary potential SCC lists; a plant species list and a non-plant species list. All species qualifying as “*must*” or “*should*” consider were clearly identified. These lists were then sent to the Forest for Phase-2 of the evaluation process. A flowchart outlining the criteria used to identify a species as “*must*” or “*should*” can be found in Appendix A.

Phase-2, the fine-filter process, was completed between May and early June 2016 for both preliminary potential SCC lists. Using criteria outlined in FSH 1909.12 (10)(12.52c-12.55), MLNF Forest Plan Revision interdisciplinary team (IDT) specialists completed in-depth reviews of all species identified as “*must*” or “*should*” consider. The IDT specialists also utilized WO (WO 2016) and RO (RO 2016) SCC guidance documents, as well as lessons learned from early and mid-adopter Forests undergoing forest plan revision. Additionally, the IDT specialists studied both species lists in their entirety in an effort to ensure no species that should have been identified for consideration were missed.

It is important to note that FSH 1909.12(10)(12.52c) states that, “*If there is insufficient scientific information available to conclude there is a substantial concern about a species’ capability to persist in the plan area over the long-term that species cannot be identified as a species of conservation concern.*” Only species that met all criteria outlined in the FSH 1909.12(10)(12.52-12.55) were recommended by the IDT specialists for consideration by the Regional Forester.

Summary of MLNF Recommendations to the RO

Of the 53-plant species identified by the RO for consideration, the IDT specialists recommended that 2 be considered for potential SCC designation. Of the 23-non-plant species identified by the RO for consideration, the IDT specialists recommended that 9 be considered for potential SCC designation. One additional species was added to the list by the IDT specialists; the peregrine falcon. This species was not originally identified by the RO for consideration on the MLNF. However, but it is identified in NatureServe as having a state status of S2B in CO. Additionally, the Ashley National Forest identified it as one of their potential SCC, we determined a review needed to be completed. This left a total of 10-non-plant species that were recommended to be considered for

potential SCC designation. See Table 1 for a listing of all species recommended for further consideration by the MLNF.

Table 1. A complete table of potential SCC species recommended by the MLNF for further review by the RO. This table includes the initial RO identification status for “Must” or “Should” as well as the final MLNF recommendation.

Taxa	Scientific Name	Common Name	Must/Should Consider for SCC	MLNF Recommendation
Amphibian	<i>Anaxyrus boreas</i>	Boreal Toad	Yes	Yes
Bird	<i>Leucosticte atrata</i>	Black Rosy-finch	Yes	Yes
Bird	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	Greater-sage Grouse	Yes	Yes
Bird	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon	No*	Yes
Fish	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii pleuriticus</i>	Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	Yes	Yes
Fish	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii utah</i>	Bonneville Cutthroat Trout	Yes	Yes
Insect	<i>Sweltsa cristata</i>	Utah Sallfly	Yes	Yes
Mammal	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Yes	Yes
Mammal	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	Fringed Myotis	Yes	Yes
Plant	<i>Oreoxis bakeri</i>	Baker's Oreoxis	Yes	Yes
Plant	<i>Erigeron mancus</i>	La Sal Daisy	Yes	Yes

*This species was not originally identified by the RO for consideration on the MLNF. However, but it is identified in NatureServe as having a state status of S2B in CO. Additionally, the Ashley National Forest identified it as one of their potential SCC, we determined a review needed to be completed.

Best Available Scientific Information

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Forest to use BASI. In observance, IDT specialists utilized peer-reviewed journals and publications, scientific databases (*i.e. herbariums, GIS databases, etc.*), personal communications with recognized professionals, and specimen records in addition to their own professional knowledge to complete these species reviews. BASI was documented in the ‘Literature Cited’ section of each individual species’ review template. For the purpose of this Report, all literature cited identified within the species reviews has been compiled into two ‘Potential SCC Species Review Literature Cited’ sections; a plant section (Appendix B) and a non-plant section (Appendix C).

Adjoining National Forests

FSH 1900.12, Chapter 10, 12.52(d)(3d) states that SCC species on adjoining National Forests (including plan areas across regional boundaries) should be considered. For the purpose of this evaluation process the following National Forests were identified as ‘adjoining’ to the MLNF: the Ashley, Fishlake, and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests (Cummins 2016). This white paper is attached as Appendix D. Since, of these three National Forests only the Ashley NF has begun their potential SCC review process, the 2013 Region 4 Sensitive Species lists was also consulted for these Forests.

State and Federally Recognized Tribes T&E and High Priority Species

FSH 1900.12, Chapter 10, 12.52(d)(3b-c) states that species listed as “*Threatened and Endangered*” by the state or a federally recognized tribe as well as species identified as a “*high priority for conservation*” by the federal or state government or a federally recognized tribe, should also be considered. In keeping with this guidance and BASI, both the Colorado and Utah Wildlife Action Plans were included in the species reviews, as was available information from the Colorado or State Natural Heritage Programs. The Navajo Nation overlaps portions of Utah and as such, their “Threatened and Endangered Species List” was also consulted.

Recommendation Formatting

A draft species review template was provided by the RO. A review template was completed for all species identified by the RO as “*must*” or “*should*” consider, as well as one species that was added by an IDT specialist for consideration by the Regional Forester. The IDT specialist’s recommendations for consideration can be found on page one of each species’ completed review template. The recommendation decision is styled in the “Issue-Rule-Analysis/Application –Conclusion” format as directed in FSH 1909.12(10)(12.55(9)).

NEXT STEPS

Following the SCC determination process, the Regional Office reviews the lists of recommended potential SCC from the Forest. The Regional Forester will make a determination on the preliminary SCC lists, which will be returned to the Forest to undergo public review and comment. The public review period will coincide with the Forest’s plan revision Assessment Phase, which is planned to begin in early August 2016.

Once public comments are reviewed and considered, the Forest will submit recommendations to the Regional Forester for inclusion on the final SCC list. It is expected this submission will occur from the Forest in the winter of 2016-2017, coinciding with the completion of the Assessment Phase of plan revision.

DEFINITIONS

Included below is a list of key terms and how they were defined/utilized for the Manti-La Sal National Forest potential SCC reviews.

Adjoining Forest: For the purpose of these reviews, the forests defined as ‘adjoining’ the MLNF where the Ashley, Fishlake and Unita-Wasatche-Cache. In addition to close proximity to the MLNF, these Forests form a relatively contiguous ‘green corridor’ for wildlife species. For additional information see Appendix D.

Best Available Scientific Information (BASI): “...*the most accurate, reliable, and relevant...*” information to the issue or topic being covered (§219.3).

Known To Occur: “*A species is known to occur in a plan area if, at the time of plan development the best available scientific information indicates that a species is established or is becoming established.*” (FSH 1909.12(10)(12.52)).

Plan(ning) Area: “*The NFS land covered by a plan*” (§219.19). For this report, all lands that fall within the Manti-La Sal National Forest’s boundary.

Persistence: “*Continued existence* (§219.19).” Considered in “*ecological time*” or the “*time period associated with ecological processes...*” (RO 2016).

Recent occurrence: For the purpose of these evaluations, within the last 20-years was utilized to define a recent occurrence.

Native Species: “*An organism that was historically present in a particular ecosystem as a result of natural migratory or evolutionary processes and not as a result of an accident or deliberate introduction...*” (§219.19)

Species of Conservation Concern (SCC; §219.9(c)): A species “... *other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area.*”

Substantial Concern: *“The best available scientific information about the species indicates substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area.”* (FSH 1909.12(10)(12.52c)).

‘Substantial’ is “...*best demonstrated by some combination of threats either directly or indirectly to its characteristic habitat: decline in the sizes and/or numbers of its populations and/or declines in its habitats.*”(RO 2016)

Sufficient BASI: As available data and habitat condition varies between species, ‘sufficient BASI’ was determined on a species basis by IDT specialist. Multiple variable, when available, were taken into account for each determination. These variables include population size and distribution within the plan area, the number and severity of threats to the species and its desired habitat, climate change, species resilience, and any other relevant available information.

Viable Population: *“A population of species that continues to persist over the long term with sufficient distribution to be resilient and adaptable to stressors and likely future environments.”* (§219.19)

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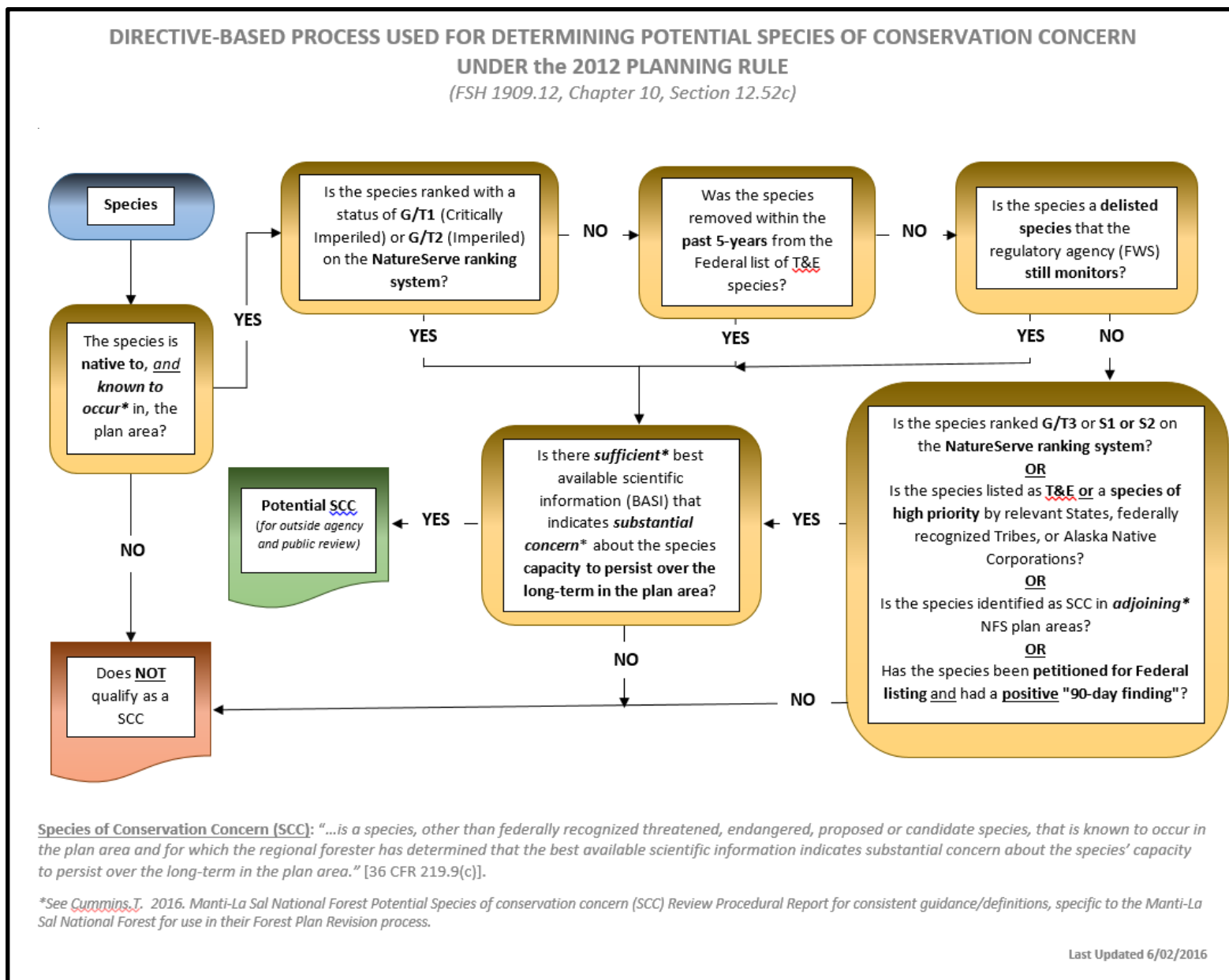
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Appendix A. Flowchart outlining the criteria used to identify a species as “*must*” or “*should*” be considered for the Manti-La Sal National Forest’s Plan Revision.



Appendix B. Manti-La Sal National Forest's potential SCC species review literature cited': Plant Species.

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Appendix D. Manti-La Sal National Forest white paper outlining determination of adjoining National Forests for the Forest Plan Revision Process (created March 10, 2016).

The Manti-La Sal National Forest's Consideration of Adjacent National Forests' Potential SCC Lists

In the months of March and April, 2016 the Manti-La Sal received their initial potential species lists from the Regional Office (RO). In this list the RO used criteria and guidance from the 2012 Planning Rule and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) to conduct a coarse-level species filter to identify plant and non-plant species that should be considered for listing as a species of conservation concern (SCC) for the MLNF. This list was sent to the MLNF with the intent that the MLNF resource specialists will perform review all potential SCC species identified by the RO. These species reviews will be completed using a template provided by the RO. This template will assist the Forest in documenting the relevant information they utilize in preparing a recommendation to the Regional Forester as to whether the species in question should or should not be included as a potential SCC. In addition to reviewing all of the species identified as potential SCC by the initial RO filtering process, the MLNF resource specialists are also responsible for identifying any potential SCC species that they feel meet the criteria outlined in the 2012 Planning Rule and the FSH that were missed by the initial RO coarse-filter process. These species will also have a species review completed using the same template provided by the RO.

In keeping with the FSH and supporting Regional guidance, the MLNF is responsible for considering the SCC lists of “*adjoining National Forest plan areas (including areas across regional boundaries)*”. The MLNF is part of a ‘green corridor’ comprise of the MLNF and three other National Forests, the Ashley NF, the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NF, and the Fishlake NF. For the sole purpose of our potential SCC species reviews, we are considering all four Forests as ‘adjoining’. If available, we will be reviewing the potential SCC lists for the four other National Forests, focusing on species identified as ‘Must’ or ‘Should’ be considered by the RO in the initial potential SCC lists. Additionally, if available we will review the respective Forest’s completed potential SCC species templates. As the RO is currently working on completing their initial coarse-filter potential SCC lists for all of the Forests in Region 4, these lists and completed templates may not be available for all four Forests. If the initial potential SCC list is not available, we will look to the existing Regional ‘sensitive species’ list for each Forest. Additional list consultations will be performed with the adjoining Forests and the SCC selection process progresses.

In some cases, different National Forests may not identify the same species as one of the potential SCCs for their Forests, even if it occurs on both Forests. One example of why this might occur is if one Forest has limited suitable habitat and multiple ‘threats’ that are impacting the species’ “*long term capability to persist*”, whereas another Forest may have abundant suitable habitat and fewer ‘threats’ impacting that species. The first Forest would include that species as a potential SCC per the 2012 Planning Rule. However, the second Forests’ natural resourced specialists may not identify that species’ “*long term capability to persist*” as a concern on their Forest resulting in that Forest not including the species on their potential SCC list.